This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 004480

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA ARPI, LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2015
TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR KDEM KU SUCCESSION NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
SUBJECT: AMID FLURRY OF RUMORS ABOUT SUCCESSION, PM OPENS
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WITH AMIR ABSENT

REF: KUWAIT 4445 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed
Al-Jaber Al-Sabah opened the National Assembly October 17,
delivering the Government speech on behalf of the Amir, who
was notably absent from the protocolary duty. The session
comes amid a flurry of rumors that Shaykh Sabah will replace
the Crown Prince when he returns from medical treatment in
London on October 19 (ref. B). Shaykh Sabah's speech gave no
indication, however, of changes to come. It completely
avoided controversial legislation and concentrated instead on
general GOK policies, including promoting national unity,
protecting the environment, upgrading the educational system,
and ensuring the judicial independence. Shaykh Sabah
dismissed National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi's
suggestion that the Government recognize political parties.
Parliamentary committee elections saw little change, with the
notable exception of liberal MP Abdulwahab Al-Haroun who lost
his position in the Budget and Finance Committee, a committee
he headed for eight years. The session saw the formation of
two new committees, one on women's affairs and the other on
probing administrative corruption. End summary.

Routine Speech

¶2. (SBU) The National Assembly opening was remarkably muted,
despite continuing speculations over the ruling family
controversy (ref. B). The Government speech, delivered by
the PM, focused primarily on general policy issues, rather
than controversial legislation. Shaykh Sabah lauded the
National Assembly's May 2005 approval of legislation giving
Kuwaiti women the right to vote as a "distinguished, historic
accomplishment." He also highlighted the "sacrifices made by
security officers" in the January 2005 confrontations with
extremists in Kuwait, and underlined the GOK's commitment to
fighting terrorism "in cooperation with the international
community." The PM emphasized the need to prevent "sectarian
exchanges"; encouraged Kuwaiti media to promote "positive
freedom" and avoid creating tensions; and welcomed the
efforts made to release Kuwaiti Guantanamo detainees. He
also commented on the licensing of non-governmental
organizations (NGOs), the GOK's e-government plans, and the
services extended to Kuwaiti citizens.

No Go On Political Parties

¶3. (SBU) National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi in his
speech, which preceded the Prime Minister's, called on the
Government to recognize political parties. Stating that the
country was in "great need of political reform," Al-Khorafi
added that current challenges could not be dealt with by past
methods. It is illogical to have political associations in
Kuwait, "without looking into legalizing and organizing
them," the English-daily Kuwait Time quoted Al-Khorafi as
saying. Shaykh Sabah dismissed this possibility to reporters
after the session, saying "the Government is not interested
in the issue of legalizing political parties." The Speaker
agreed, however, with the PM's comments on national unity,
stressing that national unity "is the heart of the country's
political system with plurality as its artery and social
integration the base of its strength and immunity."

No Amir; No Substance

¶4. (C) This National Assembly session marked the first time
that Amir Shaykh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah failed to open the
session, deputizing instead the Prime Minister to open the
session and deliver his remarks. (Note: Last year the Amir
was present for the opening session, but was unable to give
his speech; the PM spoke on his behalf. End note.) The most
significant aspect of the Amiri speech delivered by the Prime
Minister was what was left out. He did not address
controversial legislation on development of the northern oil
fields known as Project Kuwait, the Press and Publications
Law, or proposals to reduce the number of electoral
districts.

****

Visit Embassy Kuwait's Classified Website:
http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/

You can also access this site through the
State Department's Classified SIPRNET website
****
LEBARON